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BUREAU OF EXPERTIZING.

Advice as to the placing at public or
private sale of art works of all kinds, pic-
tures, sculptures, furniture, bibelots, etc.,
will be given at the office of the AMERICAN
ART NEWS, and also counsel as to the value
of art works and the obtaining of the best
"expert" opinion on the same. For these
services a nominal fee will be charged. Per-
sons having art works and desirous of dis-
posing or obtaining an idea of their value
will find our service on these lines a saving
of time, and, in many instances, of unneces-
sary expense. It is guaranteed that any
opinion given will be so given without re-
gard to personal or commercial motives.

"MASTERPIECE"—ABUSED WORD.

Americans seem to be especially
prone to the misuse or abuse of words,
and to adding to or incorporating new
words, without proper regard to or a
study of their meaning, in their ver-
nacular. This can be more easily un-
derstood, when it is the practice of the
stage or of the general public, but it is
surprising when art dealers, collectors,
yes, and even art critics and writers,
who are supposedly persons having
education and information in their line,
commit this fault, and so glaringly as
in the now prevalent use among and by
them of the word "masterpiece" in ap-
plication to art works, and especially to
pictures.

The misuse or abuse of this word
"masterpiece," has come to such a pass
that we constantly read of miniatures,

ivories or rug "masterpieces," etc.,
while there are few even of the smallest
art exhibitions throughout the country,
which are not described, either as made
up of or containing "masterpieces." One
of the N. Y. dailies this week pub-
lished on the same day, articles on 59
"masterpieces," shown in the Altman
Gallery, and a score of "masterpieces"
at an Eastside settlement house. The
word has become meaningless, through
its constant and ignorant use or abuse.
It does not or should not signify as the
public generally accepts it, almost a
unique and certainly a superior art
work.

A "masterpieces" really signifies a work
of an artist or artisan, fashioned to
meet the approval of judges or a jury as
a qualification for the producer, as a
member of an art body or guild—or one
fashioned, according to custom, by an
artist or artisan who has become a
"master" of an art body or guild to sig-
nalize his election, and which becomes
the property of such art body or guild.
Thus the members of the National
Academy of Design, when, after their
election as associates they paint a pic-
ture for the Academy's permanent col-
lection, as is the custom, may with
propriety call this their "masterpiece."

If all art works are "masterpieces,"
descriptions of such works become mean-
ingless. In the words of Gilbert's old
song, in "The Gondoliers," "When
everybody's somebody, then no one's
anybody."

We commend to American dealers,
collectors, artists, and especially to art
writers and correspondents, the careful
reading or re-reading of Emerson's es-
say, "On the Use of the Superlative," and
an avoidance of the word "masterpiece"
to signify superior or great works.

CORRESPONDENCE

Good and Bad in Charity Show.

Editor, AMERICAN ART NEWS.

Dear Sir:

Despite what is reported to have been a
good attendance at the display of 59 works
by old masters, for the benefit of the French
Secours National, in the galleries of the late
Benjamin Altman, and which I understand
is to be wisely extended over next Monday,
April 5, I do not believe that even the dis-
tinctive art lovers among the N. Y. public
have at all realized the extreme importance
and educational and artistic value of this re-
markable offering, of interesting and im-
portant canvases, for the attendance has not
been what it should have been, or would
have been had they so realized its import-
ance. It seems to me that the so called art
critics, and certainly the art writers of the
dailies, have missed their opportunity, and
failed to rise to the occasion in their long
winded and perfunctory notices, as a rule,
of the display. There has not been one
really scholarly article published that I have
been able to find.

Apart from the individual beauty, impres-
siveness and value, from both the educa-
tional and financial viewpoints of many of
the canvases that are shown, their exhibi-
tion, and wisely, under their owners' names,
emphasizes what an art mart the American
Metropolis has become, and how the great
pictures of the world are flowing to this
country—at least those which are not per-
manently immured in the tombs of the Mu-
seums or held by the now comparatively
few wealthy owners of Europe, who as yet
are strong enough to resist the temptation
of large offers for their treasures, but who
unless the war soon ends, may have to suc-
cumb, like many of their fellows the past 20
years to these tempting offers from Ameri-
can millionaires.

The exhibition also emphasizes—and this
is the reverse side of the picture—and can
only be alluded to now as the display is
held for a charitable purpose—how ignor-

antly and unwisely some American collect-
ors purchase, or in other words the duplicity
of some dealers and the credulity of some
collectors. For, alas, in the company of
such distinguished canvases, as Mr. Kahn's
"Botticelli" portrait, his Franz Hals "Fam-
ily Group," and his Rembrandt "Jewish
Student," Mr. Frick's two Goya portraits,
and his splendid Turner, "The Harbor of
Dieppe," Mrs. Huntington's fine Rembrandt
"The Savant," and her splendid Reynolds
group; Mr. Geo. Gould's striking Gainsbor-
ough, the "Portrait of Mr. Charles F. Abel,"
and among the moderns, Mr. Geo. F. Ba-
ker's wonderful Rousseau, "The Fisherman,"
and Mr. Friedsam's Geo. Inness, which so
well holds its own, and others, there are
several poor and mediocre works, and some
wrongly attributed, if no worse, among the
examples of the early French masters, whose
output, with a few exceptions, emphasizes
the shallow artificiality of this school. Some
of these canvases have "h' stories" which
cannot be told while they are under Char-
ity's sign.

To me, one of the most interesting prob-
lems in the exhibition is the large and strik-
ing three-quarter length seated portrait of a
painter at his easel, owned by Mr. E. R.
Bacon, and which is cataloged as a portrait
of "Hyacinthe Rigaud," by J. A. Watteau.
While the dates of Watteau and Rigaud
would permit, as far as I can study them,
of either man having painted the other at
about the age of the sitter depicted, if the
picture is by either brush, I should call it a
portrait of Watteau by Rigaud, for I can
see nothing of Watteau in it, and I happen
to know that Mr. E. C. Hodgkins, in whose
London galleries the picture hung for some
years, and who held it at \$60,000, before it
was transferred to the late Mr. Blakeslee,
and from him to Mr. Bacon, was rather in-
clined to the authorship of Rigaud at the
time he owned the canvas. Be this as it
may, the picture is a striking one.

It will probably be many a day before
such an assemblage of old pictures is again
offered at public exhibition in America, and
I beseech all art lovers to visit the display
before it closes.

Yours very truly,

Connoisseur.

N. Y., Mar. 31, 1915.

Letter to the Council of the Academy of
Design from an Academician.

Gentlemen:

As a member of our body, I desire to ex-
press to you my gratification at the opening
of our present exhibition free to the public.
It gave me extreme pleasure, when visiting
the galleries yesterday, to observe the at-
tentive and interested look upon the faces
of our numerous visitors, and I felt that
our academy had taken a step in advance,
both in deserving the gratitude of our city
in this public-spirited action, as well as the
approval of our artists in placing their work
before the eyes of so many of our citizens.

Not the First "Free Academy."

I must call to your memory, however,
that this is not the first time that the Acad-
emy has opened its doors free to the public.
In 23rd Street, at the 73rd Annual exhibition
in 1898, our galleries were opened free to
the public every Sunday afternoon. The at-
tendance was very large and appreciative,
averaging over 1,000 visitors each Sunday
during the exhibition. In my opinion, it is
to be regretted that this custom was discon-
tinued, as it was more favorable to the fi-
nancial condition of the Academy, when only
Sundays and holidays were free. We are
aware that there are a great many friends
of the Academy who are not only able, but
more than willing, to pay admission to our
galleries and who would prefer to examine
the works shown when the audience is more
exclusive and less crowded. A very serious
error was committed at the time that the
free Sundays were discontinued in increas-
ing the price of admission from a quarter to
a half dollar. This excessive charge for ad-
mission has condemned our exhibitions to
almost complete oblivion during the past
two years and been a great injustice to the
exhibiting artists by depriving them of a
fair audience. You must not forget, gentle-
men, that you are in office for the purpose
of administering the affairs and resources
of our Academy with your most practical
business intelligence, for the benefit of the
artists of our country and the Institution
combined. It is a question whether the
soundest wisdom has prevailed, either in
establishing an entrance fee of half a dol-
lar, or in going to the other extreme of ob-
taining no gate receipts whatever. The prin-
cipal resources of our Academy have been
the results of the laborious efforts and thrift
of our predecessors, and you, as councillors
of the Academy, are scarcely justified in fol-
lowing alone your personal tastes, either in
the selection and arrangement of the exhibi-
tions, as you have supervision over the
action of the juries and the hanging commit-
tees, or in the administration of its various
business interests. But an unbiased prac-
tical common-sense should guide you.

Old Members Badly Treated.

Another point in the conduct of the Acad-
emy's interests to which I beg to draw your
thoughtful consideration is the alienation of
much of the good-will and feeling of union
in our body by the disregard which has
been shown to our older members by the
enactment of laws and jury rules antago-
nistic to their interests as members. It may
be the course of Nature to cast aside those
who can no longer fight to retain their
"place in the sun," but it is not the course of
Christian gentlemen. You must not forget
that much of the wealth of our Academy,
much of the dignity which now surrounds
your office, was gained by the labor and
sacrifice of your predecessors, the works of
whose brush you now permit ruthlessly to
be placed upon the sky-line in our exhibi-
tions, or turned out altogether. No house
can prosper that refuses respect to its fore-
fathers, and this, gentlemen, may be one
of the reasons why your earnest appeals
for more money and a better site have fallen
upon deaf ears. There are those of our New
York people who venerated and loved our
older Academicians. Those men enjoyed a
distinction and popularity that has not de-
scended to our lot. But what you have
served to others will one day be served to
you. Our Academy has permitted the most
distinguished of our predecessors to be
treated with ignominy. Men whose tal-
ents shone from the line in their day, whose
works attracted praise and patronage, have
been crowded from our walls, all to obtain
the popular suffrages of the present-day
far-off followers of Manet. I recall, as I
write, men who helped to lay the founda-
tions upon which you sit as officers of our
Academy, who today never cross the thresh-
old, whose works have been cast out and
whose tenderest self-respect has been cru-
elly wounded.

These thoughts, to which I wish to draw
your attention, have been latent in many
minds, though they have not been spoken.
I congratulate the members of the Council
and the jury upon the merits and breadth of
this year's exhibition, but in doing so I am
prompted to call to your attention, and that
of my fellow-artists, the above points, which
I deem worthy of deep and careful consid-
eration, particularly if we would have our
Academy respected by our thoughtful and
most intelligent people.

Very respectfully,

Carroll Beckwith.

New York, Mar. 29, 1915.

A Welcome Appreciation.

Editor, AMERICAN ART NEWS.

Dear Sir:

I cannot resist sending you just a line
to say that the AMERICAN ART NEWS is the
best art journal that comes into my home
and I take several.

I rely upon it for information that I find
nowhere else. For my part I want to
thank its publishers for the fearlessness,
fairness and vitality one always finds in its
expressions. Most sincerely yours,

Harriet Blackstone.

Glencoe, Ill.,

Mar. 29, 1915.

OBITUARY.

Maurice Moses (George Thompson).

Maurice Moses, of the Holland Gal-
leries, better known to the trade as George
Thompson (which latter name he was leg-
ally given by an act of Legislature 24 years
ago, for business use), and long one of the
best known picture dealers in America, died
at his residence in this city on Saturday
from a heart affection, aged 69.

Mr. Thompson, during his long and active
business career, had handled many impor-
tant pictures, and represented for a number
of years several of the western and New
England museums in the purchase of pic-
tures for them. He had an unusually good
knowledge of pictures which made him
an excellent judge of both quality and ap-
praisal values. During the later years of
his life, Mr. Thompson operated exten-
sively in real estate, and left the manage-
ment of the Holland Galleries largely to his
son, Mr. Morse, who enjoys the friendship
of the trade in general, and with whom and
the other members of Mr. Moses family, the
greatest and most sincere sympathy is felt
in their bereavement.

Mrs. George R. Schieffelin.

Mrs. George R. Schieffelin, widow of the
late George Schieffelin, and who was born
Julia Delaplaine, died at her residence in
this city on Sunday last. Mrs. Schieffelin,
who was left by her husband the nucleus
of quite a collection of old and modern
pictures, had largely increased this collec-
tion during the past few years, chiefly pur-
chasing at auction sales, and notably from
the several sales held by Mr. Edward
Brandus at the Silo Galleries. Mrs.
Schieffelin was the mother of Mrs. Bruce
and Mrs. Bowers Ismay, the wives of the
Liverpool ship owners and of Mrs. Henry G.
Trevor and a sister of Mrs. Hamilton Fish.